

Response to Office Action
Mailed August 14, 2001

Serial No. 09/583,486

Claims Showing Additions and Deletions

1. A reusable and returnable container for holding product therein during shipment and then being returned for reuse, the container comprising:

a body having at least two opposing and moveable side structures, the side structures configured for being selectively moved into an erected position for shipment and moved into a collapsed position for reducing the size of the container for return;

a dunnage structure spanning between the side structures, the dunnage structure being operably coupled to the side structures for moving to an erected position for receiving product when the side structures are erected and moving to a collapsed position in the body when the side structures are collapsed so that the dunnage remains with the container when returned;

the dunnage structure having an open end facing at least one side structure of the body, the at least one side structure defining an open area which is in alignment with the dunnage structure open end for accessing the dunnage structure and transferring product into and out of the dunnage structure from a side of the container;

whereby a person may more efficiently and safely remove product from the container and the container and dunnage is readily reused.

2. The container of claim 1 wherein said at least one side structure comprises an elongated frame section positioned along a top edge of the body, the dunnage structure

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being coupled to the elongated frame section, an open area defined below the frame section for accessing the open end of the dunnage structure.

3. (AMENDED) The container of claim [1] 2 wherein said frame section is hingedly coupled with respect to the body to be selectively hinged between a collapsed and erected position.

4. The container of claim 1 further comprising a latching structure coupled to the body for securing at least one of said side structures in the erected position.

5. The container of claim 4 wherein said latching structure comprises an aperture positioned on the body, and a member coupled to the side structure and configured to engage the aperture for securing the side structure in the erected position.

6. The container of claim 5 wherein said aperture is in the form of a slot, the member comprising a latching bar movably coupled to the side structure, a portion of the latching bar being configured to slide into the slot.

7. The container of claim 5 further comprising a bracket which defines said aperture, the bracket being coupled to the body.

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8. The container of claim 6 wherein said latching bar is biased for engaging the aperture.
9. The container of claim 1 further comprising a generally transparent cover overlying said open area of the at least one side structure for closing the side structure while providing visual access to the dunnage structure and any contents therein.
10. The container of claim 1 further comprising rails coupled to the side structures, the dunnage structure being coupled at its ends to the rails to span between the rails.
11. The container of claim 10 wherein said dunnage structure comprises a plurality of compartments coupled at their ends to the rails, the compartments being slidable along said rails.
12. The container of claim 10 wherein said dunnage structure comprises a plurality of pouches coupled at their ends to the rails, spacers being positioned between at least two of the pouches for separating the pouches on the rails.
13. The container of claim 1 further comprising a latch, the latch coupled to at least one of the side structures, and being engageable with an adjacent side structure for securing the side structures in the erected position.

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14. The container of claim 13 further comprising an actuating mechanism, the actuating mechanism being coupled to the slidable latch actuatable to disengage the latch so that the side structure may be moved to a collapsed position.

15. The container of claim 14 wherein said actuating mechanism comprises a cord operably coupled to the latch such that pulling the cord disengages the latch.

16. The container of claim 14 wherein said actuating mechanism comprises a lever operably coupled to the latch such that moving the lever disengages the latch.

17. The container of claim 9 wherein said cover is flexible to collapse with the side structure in the collapsed position, a portion of the cover remaining over a portion of said open area for preventing undesired contaminants from entering the container when it is collapsed.

18. The container of claim 9 wherein said cover is movably coupled to the body for being moved from at least a portion of the open area to allow access to contents of the dunnage structure.